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ABSTRACT

Educational reform commissions and state departments of education across the United States have recommended that would-be administrators spend more time in planned field experiences, internships, and other practica and on-the-job learning activities. Despite this need, systematic research on experiential learning for administrators is remarkably deficient. This paper discusses the rationale for such programs and reviews 40 studies on field-based practica for educational administrators. All these studies employ a descriptive survey design, a single data collection technique (usually a specially designed questionnaire), and a problem-solving, rather than a theory-based, perspective. Most studies describe local experiential learning models developed in university graduate education programs. The remainder evaluated local models (usually favorably) based on participants' comments or examined structural features of "successful" programs. This paper concludes that high quality investigations of practica are nonexistent. Most work is without theoretical base, examines only local issues, is confined largely to internships, and neglects to explore the long-term developmental characteristics of practica. Suggestions are provided for developing a future research agenda to explore mentoring issues, underlying assumptions about "learning-by-doing," the impact of administrative interns on the quality of school organizational life, the effects of practica on candidates' future career success, universities' actual commitment to field experience, and clinical alternatives to full-time, paid internships. Included are 22 references. (MLH)

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ADMINISTRATIVE INTERNSHIPS AND FIELD EXPERIENCES:

A STATUS REPORT

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ADMINISTRATIVE INTERNSHIPS AND FIELD EXPERIENCES: A STATUS REPORT

The recent report by the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration included as one of its strongest recommendations the view that preservice administrator preparation in this country would be enhanced greatly if it made greater use of experiential learning activities (UCEA, 1987). In addition, state departments of education across the United States have increasingly endorsed the need for would-be administrators to learn more about their future duties by spending more time engaged in planned field experiences, internships, and other forms of practica and "on-the-job" learning activities. In the past 15 years, the number of states requiring some form of internship or field experience as part of initial administrator certification standards has increased from ten to 25 (Gousha, LoPresti, and Jones, 1986). The assumption that there is some great value to be derived from practical, on-the-job, clinical learning experiences is clearly one that is being vigorously endorsed by many who hold a stake in the business of preparing educational leaders for the future.

The emphasis on making use of field-based learning, or practica as the term will generally be referred to throughout this paper, as a vital part of educational administration training programs has been a rather consistent theme found in numerous periodic reform movements related to the improvement of leadership training. The general search for structure, legitimacy, and professionalization of educational administration as an "honest-to-goodness" field of study and practice throughout the 1950's, for example, witnessed an accompanying search for more effective internship programs (Newell, 1956; Hooker, 1958). As studies and analyses of educational administration

began to flourish and grow during the 1960's and 1970's, there continued to be periodic calls for the creation of more effective strategies to be utilized in assisting aspiring administrators to learn more about their chosen craft through widespread participation in realistic, job-like learning experiences (Culbertson and Hencley, 1962; Trump et al., 1970). In more recent years, statements of educational reform have typically included assessments of the role of educational administrators as a critical factor in supporting more effective school practices. In turn, emphasis has generally increased on the need to expect that administrators in training would receive more effective and intensive learning experiences in the field through involvement in practica of one sort or another.

Despite this relatively persistent emphasis on the need for the internship, planned field experience, or practicum to be utilized as a standard feature of educational administrator training programs, however, there has been a remarkable lack of recent systematic study of this issue. Within the past several years, reviews by Iannaccone (1963), Griffiths and Moore (1967), and Derrick (1971) have affirmed the need for student teaching practice to serve as a regular feature of preservice preparation for classroom instructors. By contrast, comprehensive treatments of the use of field-based training for educational leaders have been rare. The Cooperative Program for Educational Administration (CPEA) (Hooker, 1958), the Center for Applied Research in Education (Davies, 1962), and the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) (Hencley, 1963) all engaged in work that has served as important milestones that provided thorough statements regarding the history, rationale, and common assumptions held for the practicum used to prepare school administrators. Further, little has been written to document the nature of existing research that is related to the concept of "learning to lead by doing."

Background of the Educational Practicum

A widely-held and generally revered assumption that is implicit in the training programs utilized as part of the preservice preparation of many different professional roles is that one is better socialized to that profession when one learns the application of theoretical, classroom learning in field settings. This belief in the value of structured experiential learning has given birth over the years to such well-respected practices as the internship in medicine, the clerkship in law, clinical field placement in psychology and social work, and the internship in public administration. This belief has also been embraced in professional education where the requirement of student teaching has become a universal preservice expectation for teachers. In addition, other educational roles such as the school administrator and supervisor have also been viewed as ones wherein preservice preparation is enhanced with opportunities for experiential learning that goes beyond the material covered in conventional university courses.

One of the more succinct statements of the rationale for making use of practica in preparing educational personnel is the following by Turney (1982). It comes from the field of teacher education.

> Ideally conceived the practicum is a powerful series of professional experiences in which student teachers apply, refine, and reconstruct theoretical learnings, and through which they develop their teaching competence. The practicum is an integral part of the programme of teacher education contributing to the achievement of its aims and closely related to its content competence.

This statement was written to describe the assumptions found in student teaching. As a result, it may be said that it is not relevant for a discussion of the practicum for school administrators. The emphasis, for example on the use of student teaching as a way to

help people to "refine their teaching competence" is hardly comparable to the problem of finding a place for prospective administrators to "refine administrative skills" which are not similar to the tasks of teaching. Nevertheless, it appears that this rationale conceptually has some value to future school executives and their training through the use of structured practica. It seems to make sense that an effective way to enable people to understand the linkage between theory learned in university courses and practice "in the real world" of schools is to require future administrators to spend some time working in a school, at least on a part-time basis, before going out into the job market for the first time. Once again, speaking from the perspective of teacher education, Turney (1982) noted a number of specific objectives to be addressed through a training practicum in professional education:

1. [It enables individuals] to test their commitment to...a career...;
2. ...to gain insight into the operation of a...school, [its] goals and how they may be achieved;
3. ...to apply knowledge and skills gained through college studies in a practical setting;
4. ...to progressively develop...competencies through participation in a range of practical experiences;
5. ...to evaluate progress and identify areas where further [personal and professional] development is needed.

At least the first four of these objectives appear to serve as foci for preservice practica required of aspiring administrators. The final goal, evaluation of progress and recommendation of specific areas for further development, does not appear to be a consistent theme found in the descriptions of many educational administration programs (Daresh and LaPlant, 1985). Another recent analysis of statements of rationale for the practicum in educational administration by Daresh (1986) has shown that the literature has left little

specific direction for understanding field-based training programs, other than the following rather general observations:

1. Field-based programs are valued as approaches to the training of educational administrators;
2. Participants in field-based programs typically report feelings of satisfaction with their experiences;
3. Although field-based programs are viewed as having great potential, attention is needed to ensure that they are indeed high quality learning experiences where participants are exposed to desirable and exemplary practice.

Rationale for this Study

As it was noted earlier in this paper, the majority of recent descriptions of the internship and planned field experience in educational administration preparation programs has found its base in the area of preservice teacher education. In fact, one of the few attempts during the past few years to provide any type of analysis of the status of experiential learning for prospective school administrators was completed by Pedicone (1983) who reviewed programs provided as a part of administrator training in 19 universities. His work, a look only at formal internships, consisted primarily in the analysis of structural components of programs that were offered in large, doctoral-granting institutions. Another large-scale effort to analyze the nature of existing administrative internship programs has been undertaken by Skalski and his associates (Skalski, et al., 1987). Their work has been designed as a way to identify specific "models" of internship programs in various institutions across the nation.

Most other recent published descriptions of the use of the practicum as part of administrator training have tended to consist of descriptions of particular programs, (Trump, et al., 1970; Barrilleaux,

1972; Erlandson, 1979), or evaluations of the concept of experience-based learning in rather general terms (Sweeney, 1990; Onks, 1981; Aidala, 1982; Orton, 1986). In short, the literature has left little specific direction for assisting in increasing the understanding of field-based training programs. As a result of this apparent lack of a research or conceptual base related to the internship or planned field experience in educational administration preservice preparation programs, the review described in this paper was carried out to assist in the development of additional insights into this field.

Review Methodology

The current state of knowledge regarding the internship or planned field experience as a part of preservice administrator preparation programs might best be described as a case of accepting an idea that seems to be logical and "makes sense," but one which does not have a substantial amount of valid data upon which it is possible to draw any strong support. It is possible to discern, from numerous observations concerning the desirability of encouraging practica in several professional fields, to identify underlying assumptions for experiential learning. It is also possible to note several extremely interesting internships and planned field experience programs that have been utilized as parts of administrator preparation in a number of different settings. What is not clear at the present time is the status of research conducted recently on the use of practical learning experiences in educational administration training programs. Without a clear view of this present condition, charting a path for future investigations is nearly impossible, and the knowledge base concerning this important topic may be doomed to the pursuit of the same tired issues over and over again.

During the past several months, a systematic review of existing research on the internship and planned field experience in education-

al administration preparation programs has been carried out. This review has been but one of several ongoing activities of the UCEA Center on Field Relations in Educational Administration Training Programs, a project jointly sponsored by the University Council for Educational Administration, The Ohio State University, and the University of Cincinnati). The purpose of this review has been to determine the current status of research relative to the following questions:

1. How have issues related to internships and planned field experiences in educational administration preservice preparation programs typically been studied?
2. What have been the predominant purposes and most frequent findings of the existing research?

These questions were explored as a way to help increase the understanding of what is currently known so that better direction might be provided for future researchers.

Research completed between 1971 and 1984 was included in this review. The goal was to increase the knowledge base related to research on the administrative internship or planned field experiences through the preparation of an integrative research review, or a review of research "primarily interested in inferring generalizations about substantive issues from a set of studies directly bearing on these issues" (Jackson, 1980, p. 438). The need to engage in this type of review is described as important and necessary to the mapping of an eventual development of a scholarly field (Light and Smith, 1971) because the educational administration practicum, as is also true of many other practices utilized in professional education, suffers from a lack of "systematic efforts to accumulate information from a set of studies" (Jackson, 1980, p. 439).

Reports of recent research were sought from two sources. First, Dissertation Abstracts International (Humanities and Social Sciences) was reviewed from 1971 to 1984. In all, more than 1,100 disserta-

tions dealing with internships, planned field experiences, practica, clinical-based instruction, experiential learning, student teaching, and other similar related topics were found. Thirty-four of these dealt specifically with the use of the practicum as part of preservice administrator preparation. Second, 30 different journals in professional education (Appendix I) were reviewed for the same time frame. More than 350 articles were located concerning experiential-based preparation programs for educators. However, fewer than 50 of these articles were directed toward administrator training, and only six items could properly be classified as descriptions of research conducted on the field-based practicum for educational administration. In total, then, 40 studies served as the basis for this review.

How have internships and field experiences been studied?

Three kinds of information were sought in response to this question. First, predominant research designs were noted. Next, data collection procedures were identified. Third, whether each study was directed toward solving some educational problem, or based on theory was determined.

Research design. The most popular research design for studies of the internship and planned field experience in educational administration was the descriptive survey. In fact, all but six of the studies reviewed made use of this design. Other strategies icluded quasi-experimental treatments in three cases, and "action research" designs for two studies. One investigation made use of a correlational design, but there were no historical or true experimental studies. The studies classified as "action research" were mostly descriptions of how local internship programs were developed. This would seem to support Hopkins' (1983) view that this approach should more properly be classified as curriculum development, and not re-

search at all.

Data collection procedures. Most studies made use of only one data collection technique, and the favored technique was the questionnaire. In most cases, this questionnaire was an instrument that had been designed for use in only one specific study.

Problem-solving v. Theory-based. Research may be directed toward the solving of some specific educational concerns or problems, or it can be theory-based in nature. If it is the latter, it may be specifically designed as a way to test the constructs or assumptions of some identified theory, or it may be proposed as a way to lay the groundwork for the development and building of new theory. The majority of the research directed toward the internship or planned field experience is atheoretical and directed toward problem solving.

After reviewing the methodologies utilized in existing research on the practicum in educational administration preservice preparation programs, the following are conclusions that can be reached concerning "how" this topic has normally been studied:

1. The topic of the internship or planned field experience in educational administration preparation programs has not served as the focus of much systematic research over the years, despite its apparent importance as a tool for training future leaders.
2. The majority of research conducted on the practicum has been through doctoral dissertations. Thus, this issue is not different from many other under-investigated issues in education over the years.
3. Widely-disseminated professional education journals contain few reports of original research on the use of the practicum in educational administration preparation.
4. Most recent studies which have been conducted have been descriptive surveys which made use of questionnaires.
5. There is a virtual absence of theory-based research in this

area.

What have been the purposes and findings of the research?

This review was also designed to answer the question, "Toward what objectives was the research directed?" and "What was found?" Completed research tended to fall into one of three of the following general categories: Development of a model for the practicum in educational administration, model evaluation, or the assessment of selected structural components of formal preservice practica. Not surprisingly, some studies could easily be viewed as representatives of more than one of these categories. Despite such occasional distortions, however, it was possible to determine some general patterns of purpose for the studies that were reviewed.

Model development. The largest single group of studies described the development of a local model for providing experiential learning opportunities for aspiring school administrators. In all cases, the model was linked to a formal university-based educational administration graduate program.

It is difficult to generalize from the findings of these studies due to the idiosyncratic nature of the models that were described in the research reports. However, it was possible to note some similarities present in terms of the ways in which these models "fit" educational administration programs. For example:

1. The models that were developed were almost exclusively defined as full-time, paid internships. Other forms of practica such as planned field experiences or short-term field projects were not described.
2. The models that were developed were designed to serve as components of administrator preparation programs for the most part. In only one case was it apparent that the practicum was viewed as a normal part of the graduate academic

degree requirements for a program in educational administration, and not some add-on course for those who were seeking administrative credentials.

Model evaluation. Overlaps clearly existed between studies classified as examples of model development and model evaluation. The typical example of this latter group was a study wherein researchers contacted recent participants in a university-based internship (and rarely any other model) and asked if the experience had been successful. Predictably, the usual response was that the program was very valuable. In a few cases, individuals other than former interns were also contacted to determine their perceptions of the value of a particular intern program. Once again, the response from such actors as university supervisors, field mentors, and teachers in schools where interns worked normally indicated praise for the intern program. Thus, the assumption in most examples of "model evaluation" studies was that the practica "worked."

Analysis of structural components. The remainder of studies which did not focus on specific models of internships or field experiences looked at individual structural features of such efforts, such as the adequacy of funding, length of time, and so forth. Some of the general conclusions reached from this set of studies were:

1. The biggest hindrance to the maintenance of internship programs as part of administrator preparation programs is that they are viewed as too costly.
2. There is widespread agreement by former participants that internships are worthwhile learning activities.
3. The belief that the practicum is viewed as a valuable part of administrator training was confirmed.
4. It is difficult to encourage educational administration students to participate voluntarily in internships or other forms of practica if those students were not full-time par-

ticipants in graduate programs.

5. Institutions employing interns tend to seek such individuals each year because they represent a readily available pool of "cheap labor."

Summary Observations

The status of recent research on internships and planned field experience programs as part of educational administration preservice preparation efforts is that the field is not currently supplied with an abundance of high quality investigation. Most work is without any theoretical base, looks at only local issues, is confined largely to internships, and does nothing to look at the long-term developmental characteristics of the practicum. It is indeed frustrating to make these observations when there is clearly a trend toward increasing the importance of the role that field-based learning activities will have in preparing educational leaders.

Suggestions for the Future

The primary purpose of this paper was to review "what is" and not dwell on "what should be." Still, it is impossible not to include some suggested directions that might be followed with regard to future research activities related to internships and field experiences as part of educational administrator preparation activities.

In one way, the development of a future research agenda in this field is not one which needs complete invention. There is a sizable research base extant, in the field of student teaching, and some of the issues explored through that medium might be appropriate for extension to the world of administrator preparation as well. For example, there have been numerous studies which have focused on the relationship between the student teacher and the cooperating teacher.

The assumption, of course, is that such a relationship is an important part of the learning process for the neophyte teacher who needs to come in contact with someone of greater experience. It is surprising to note that the recent studies of internships and planned field experiences have ignored any analysis of the characteristics of effective mentors for administrative practice. There appears to be an assumption that just about any administrator in the role of the "old hand in the field" is good enough for the aspiring administrator to observe. It seems to be of little wonder, therefore, that some undesirable administrative practices are passed from one generation to the next. Who is critically examining the paths that future leaders are being taught to follow. In addition, it is also important to question whether it is desirable for any current administrative practices--"good" or "bad"--are what future leaders ought to learn. Will there ever be a new vision of administration?

Future research on internships and planned field experiences for preservice administrators might also borrow from studies of student teachers by examining the issue of impact on the long-term professional development of the student/candidate. Do people learn as a result of spending time out in the field? There is such tremendous assumed value in the concept of "learning by doing" that we may be ignoring an obvious researchable issue to test that fundamental assumption. In addition, studies of impact may also be fruitful ways of introducing a theory base into the research that will be conducted. There are numerous conceptual bases regarding human growth and development, for example, that may lend their constructs to the type of scrutiny by researchers that is absent at present.

The issue of impact might also be studied from the perspective of the institution which serves as the host for the practicum candidate. Does the presence of such an individual have any discernable effect on such issues as the work flow of a school, its psycho-social climate, or the communication patterns that exist? Studies of stud-

ent teachers often look at whether or not pupils in their care are learning. Is it not possible to ask basically the same question regarding the impact of an administrative intern on the quality of organizational life in a school or district?

Future research also needs to be contemplated in the area of reviewing the long term impact of the practicum on eventual career success of candidates. As long as most research is conducted by doctoral students who need to complete their dissertations as quickly as possible, the likelihood is slim of true longitudinal studies which track the ways in which individuals' professional lives are shaped after participating in a practicum. But, studies of this sort need to be conducted to answer the simple question, "Does it really make any difference to participate in an internship?"

Studies are also needed to look at the ways in which conventional administrator preparation programs are enhanced through the continued existence of internships and planned field experiences. Is there any real reliance on the concept of "learning by doing" by university faculties? More bluntly stated, do university faculties truly trust their colleagues in the field to the point that they believe learning can take place outside of university lecture halls? If there is true valuing of the practicum, in what ways do university programs reflect that value?

In line with the issue of determining impact of internships and field experiences on universities, one might also wish to examine the extent to which institutions of higher education really support experiential learning. Are professors in charge of such programs recognized for their contributions to the field of administrative preparation, or are they in fact penalized by their institutions for not doing something "more important" such as carrying out research, rather than working with and in the field? One must obviously consider the fact that, if faculty participation in field-based programs is viewed as a "throw-away" duty, it is unlikely that major program improve-

ments can be made in this area. Clearly, this might raise yet another issue concerning the reasons why research on administrator training is not often viewed as an area deserving scholarly attention.

Finally, one would suggest that future analyses of internships and field experiences be expanded to include studies of a wider range of activities that might be understood as "clinical" in nature. Perhaps even more frustrating than the limitations of method that were noted earlier was the fact that "learning by doing" for administrators is so narrowly defined as the full-time, paid internship. Most individuals being prepared for future administrative positions are not able to take the amount of time that is necessary for such an experience. One might argue whether or not this is desirable; it is, however, fact at present. However, there are opportunities to learn in the field without taking on a full-time internship, the type of program most often studied. There are short-term field experiences, field-based and clinical courses, field projects, and doubtless many other activities that are frequently used as a way to "bridge the gap" between theory and practice. The research on these activities is virtually nonexistent. Perhaps a prelude to such investigations would be a serious clarification of the terms which are utilized to describe learning in the field. Internships are one thing, planned field experiences are different, and some would argue that practica represent another model. A first step in the process of building a long-term research agenda might simply be to define the terms of what one would be studying.

Summary

This paper has presented a brief review of the current status of the practicum as part of educational administration preparation programs. First, it was noted that there is a general acceptance face value of individuals learning their craft by spending time in the

field. Next, it was indicated that there has been relatively little found in the literature that truly describes the nature of the assumptions and beliefs that are attached to the practicum. There have been periodic statements and calls for the increase of opportunities for people to learn about administration in the field. The literature base in educational administration, however, is not nearly as rich as the one in teacher education. Third, the existing research base related to the practicum in educational administration was reviewed, and definite limitations were noted in both the ways in which this topic has been studied, and what has been found. In response to this issue, the final part of this paper listed some possible directions that might be followed in a systematic research agenda for the future.

Much of what has been presented here presents a less than positive view of the status of research on the practicum. On the other hand, it might be comforting to note that we are not alone in this problem. Physicians and lawyers have long made the same assumptions about the need to learn in realistic settings. During the same years reviewed for this paper, only two studies were located to test the assumptions of experiential learning in those fields. This observation is not made to excuse our own lack of scientific investigation by stating that, "It's okay since doctors don't do it, either." What needs to take place, in light of the public's increasing interest in the quality of professional education and preparation programs for all professions, is serious and systematic attention to learning how people learn to do their jobs better. Such a goal is much more important than simply studying the same issues regarding internships over and over again.

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